

Exploring the Factors that Influence Successful Aging in Older Adults



The College at Brockport, State University of New York

Presenter: Chelsea O'Neill

Mentor: Kristin Heffernan



Introduction

The topic of successful aging has been of reoccurring interest to researchers. Since the lifespan is increasing globally, it is essential to have an awareness of the factors that maximize older adult's health and allow them to adapt and manage the changes that come with aging.

This research moves the dialogue beyond clinical health terms to gain a more holistic view of the factor that influence older adults' perceptions of successful aging. The goal of this study is to increase knowledge regarding the health of older adults and understand what factors in their environment influence their views of successful aging.

Research Question

What Environmental Factors Impact Adults Perception of Aging Well?

Limitations

This study was not explicit in explaining how perceptions of successful aging may be dependent on demographic characteristics such as race, sexual orientation, gender, and cultural practices. Thus, the results in the study cannot be generalized to all individuals in the older adult population. Future studies should include comprehensive research of a larger sample of older adults that can be generalized to diverse populations.

Methodology

To gather the information used in this study, a literature review was conducted. For six weeks, research from the journals of Aging and Mental Health, Geriatric Health, and John Rowe and Robert Kahn's model of successful aging was examined and synthesized. There were reoccurring factors in each study that influenced older adult participants perception of successful aging. Key findings in each research study was used to develop the literature review.

Procedure

-  1. Identified Key Terms: e.g. Successful aging, Geriatric Health
-  2. Located the literature: Used SUNY Brockport Drake Memorial Library search engine
-  3. Analyzed and selected the literature
-  4. Organized the literature based on relevance and commonality to other studies
-  5. Wrote a literature review

Results



Previous research has found that social factors such as "social structure, environment, income, access to health care" (Thatch et., al., 2017 P. 2), and social support, can significantly influence the health and morality of older adults. In a study conducted on intergenerational perceptions of successful aging, researchers found that having financial stability also impacted older adults' perceptions of successful aging.

Exploring the Factors that Influence Successful Aging in Older Adults (Kelly & Lazarus, 2015). Data in this study showed that maintaining one's financial status was a key component in the older adults' perceptions of successful aging. Older adults' ability to continue to learn new material and continued mental alertness are essential in maintaining an important aspect of aging successfully (this sentence is awkward – consider revising). Duay & Bryan (2006) found that participants believed that learning new things allowed them to be more independent and essentially remain young.

Conclusion

This study went beyond clinical terms in exploring the health of older adults. Instead, factors that older adults perceived to contribute to successful aging were evaluated and were found to be as crucial as clinical health terms. There was a commonality in the research findings in which older adults stated that financial stability, good mental health, and social support were all predictors of successful aging. Providing older adults with social resources, financial management services, and educational programs can encourage successful aging.

Acknowledgments

C-Step/McNair Program at The College at Brockport
Barbara Thompson
Helen Cheves
Kristin Heffernan

References

Furnished upon request
Carr, K., & Weir, P. L. (2016). A qualitative description of successful aging
Duay, D. L., & Bryan, V. C. (2006). Senior Adults Perceptions of Successful Aging.